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## **Question Time: Should police officers be elected?**

**What are the upsides and downsides of this idea?**

**By Rob Burgess  
Tribune night editor**

**[Editor's note:** To participate in future queries, keep an eye on our Twitter and Facebook accounts.]

When lead singer of the hardcore punk band Dead Kennedys, Jello Biafra, unsuccessfully ran for mayor of San Francisco in 1979, one of his platforms involved police officers in the city being elected by the neighborhoods they patrol. So, with the primary election coming Tuesday, we wanted to know: "Should police officers be elected like judges? Why or why not?"

### **Your answers**

"Bad idea. I'd preferred skilled officers over popular ones." — **Morgan Young**

"No. Elections don't find the best candidate for a job. More training, education, psychological evaluations, accountability, etc." — **Nicholas Groves**

“Sure, might as well elect teachers, firemen, EMTs and city sanitation employees. Oh, wait, then none out services would get done!” — **Bill Saunders**

“Because then they could be crooked like other politicians!” — **Susan Abresch**

### **Our answers**

“Oh, no. First of all, there's too many of them. How many do you want to vote on? Second, do you want people raising and spending campaign money to get and keep such jobs? How many would we vote on each term? How many cops does Kokomo have, and sheriff deputies in the county? People aren't going to be up on that many people. What if people are mad and expel a whole bunch of them, then what? We shouldn't be politicizing non-political positions at all.” — **Pedro Velazco**

“Yes and no. Some police officers are, in fact, already elected officials — every county sheriff is also a member of law enforcement. Some town marshals are also elected to their posts. I believe those positions should remain elected positions. Others, like patrol officers, are appointed or hired positions and I think they should remain that way. There's little point in having politics further invade local police forces at every level, as long as a department's leader is held accountable to the people.” — **Sarah Einselen**

“I wouldn’t be in favor of that. Seems like too much involved to get that to work, and I’m not sure it would solve any problems anyway. Electing the officers’ boss makes more sense to me.” — **Patrick Caldwell**

“Why is this such a crazy idea? I’m serious. Every argument you can come up for why this wouldn’t work could apply to every other elected position for which we already cast ballots. They’d be corrupted by money! (And our current politicians aren’t?) We need competent people for the job, not popular ones! (And we don’t need this for another elected positions?) Police officers should be skilled laborers, not hired hands! (And other leaders should be clueless?) One of the problems we discovered in the wake of Ferguson is police officers not living in the districts they police. Darrin Wilson was a Ferguson police officer, but he lived in Crestwood, Missouri. This disparity creates a rift between the police and the citizens they are hired to protect and serve. I’m not ready to say this should be widespread policy for the entire country, but let’s at least try it in a limited scope and see how it works out.” — **Rob Burgess**

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